

# Walking the Path to the Future

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Several years after the end of his Pokémon journey, Ash Ketchum finds himself dealing with a very different challenge than any Gym battle.  
[Amourshipping]

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The little boy couldn't peer his eyes away from the displays scattered around the crowded room. He passed his hands over the several Gym badges, studying them carefully before moving on to the several trophies lying on the shelves, ranging from ones from minor local tournaments to the ones of major Pokémon Leagues, all accompanied by several pictures.

They were all different, from travelling snapshots to victory celebrations, but they all had one thing in common: all showed a smiling and confident boy with a Pikachu, slowly growing older as the photos passed, always surrounded by some friends, with a particular honey-blond girl popping up more often in the more recent pictures. He looked ready to challenge everyone and have fun, and regardless of what happened throughout his journey, that never changed. If anything, he only looked more ready to throw down with his opponents.

And after all, why wouldn't he be? He was Ash Ketchum, and he was the best Pokémon trainer of all time.

The boy grinned, almost feeling like he could relive the past just by looking at all the proofs of accomplishments scattered around the studio. All of Ash Ketchum's adventures, from Kanto to Kalos to every other region, even from minor trips like the Orange Islands and the Decolore Archipelago, had some kind of recognition here. And most of it just covered the early part of his career, to boot!

After realizing he had spent the last fifteen minutes or so basking in the memories on display, however, the boy shook his head and went back to his main aim, quickly scampering towards a nearby library and searching through several old disc stashes for the recordings of old matches. Sure, he could find the videos just fine on the right site, but nothing beat being able to see the real thing as it was meant to

be. Who knew, maybe he could even find something better that internet wouldn't have.

He giggled at that thought, continuing to move slowly and carefully to find the disc he was looking for. Just a few minutes, and then he'd be out and about, with none the wiser of his plans-

Or at least, he thought things would've gone that way, until he heard a voice from outside.

"Grayson? Are you inside again?"

The boy's body went stiff, his grip tightening on the disc he held as he tried not to make a sound. When he heard some steps coming his way, sweat poured down his face.

"Uhm, n-no dad, I'm not!" he yelled, only to pale completely as he put his hands on his mouth.

That turned out to be too late, as a very familiar man with black hair and a rather old-looking Pikachu on his shoulder arrived at the room's doorstep, staring right at him.

Grayson gulped, forcing a sheepish grin. Ahead of him stood Ash Ketchum, the greatest trainer ever.

Also known as his father, and he seemed none too pleased about what he was doing.

Grayson rubbed his mop of wild black hair as he remained silent. He had probably about twenty different excuses he could've used, but he knew that his father would've seen right through all of them. He was just that good.

"You sure need to learn how to sneak around better," his father said, arms crossed. Pikachu gave him an annoyed stare too, just to underscore the point.

The boy gulped, turning the other way. "Sorry."

Grayson stood on wait, ready to be scolded for barging into his office. Instead, the man just smiled, joining in and looking over to the stashes of discs.

"It's okay." Ash let his hands wander over the many recordings, almost pulling off one labelled 'Lumiose Conference - Finals' before putting it back in. "Still looking at those old things, huh."

His gaze was distant, almost thoughtful as he looked back at his past. Grayson never understood why he was so dismissive of everything he achieved in his trainer career, after doing everything from saving the world to meeting every Champion of his time. Did he hope to do even more? Was he just feeling old?

Not that Grayson cared too much. His dad was still awesome either way.

And so the boy nodded, a brief smile once again on his face as he took in everything inside the room. "You have so many. More than anyone else."

Ash chuckled out, shaking his head. "Wonder what you would've said of Uncle Gary back then. He once got ten badges when only eight were needed."

"And then you showed him who's boss, right?" Grayson grinned, fists pumped in excitement.

"Not right then, but eventually." Ash smiled, his eyes going to his participation medal for his Silver Conference. "Charizard really was at his best in that battle."

Grayson turned the same way, remembering of the several nights he spent watching the Top Sixteen match, where his father and Professor Oak duked it out as kids. They never fought much before by what he knew, but they sure lived up to being the best trainers to ever come out of Pallet Town since Pallet Oak himself, with matches ending in one hit or so with how much power they were using against

one another. And that was just one of his first Leagues, without even using Pikachu!

As he continued to remember of his exploits, Grayson's grin widened. "You're so cool, dad."

"Well, thank you." Ash patted his trusty partner's head in response. "But I wouldn't have gone anywhere without my team. Right, Pikachu?"

"Pika chupi!" the Pokémon said, rising his paw happily.

Grayson observed Pikachu as well, his beaming face becoming even brighter. For as awesome as his dad was, he wouldn't have gone anywhere without his trusty Pikachu and partner. It was hard to think that their friendship started almost by accident, with how inseparable they had been and how many victories they pulled off together. Whatever would happen in his future, he definitely wanted a partner just like him.

And thinking of that, Grayson's smile disappeared, a heavy feeling dragging him down. He turned his head away, back to all the honors his father claimed. All the proof of how amazing he was.

"Do you think I'm gonna be as good as you, one day?" the boy asked, not sure if to his father or his achievements.

His father paused, looking over at him. Grayson gulped, waiting without a word.

"Not really." He shook his head, and Grayson paled. At least, until his father smiled again, arms on his hips. "I'm sure you and Adeline will be *better* than me."

Grayson blinked, his mind shutting down for just a second as his father's words played over and over again in his mind.

His father thought he could become better than him. Better than *the best trainer ever* .

And so he beamed, a surge of energy and excitement overflowing inside him as he faced Ash and Pikachu again.

"I'll do my best!" He pointed skyward, his grin growing even wider as he jumped ontop of a nearby chair. "Everyone will know Grayson Ketchum is the best trainer ever! And I'll have a Pikachu, too! And every starter! And everything else! And-"

He continued to ramble of everything he could think about, from winning badges without even fighting to befriending legendaries and saving the world, all the great feats his father achieved and he needed to live up to. Neither his father nor Pikachu said anything as he reached the point of catching every Pokémon under the sun, upon which Grayson exhausted every single plan for the future.

Once he was finally done with his promises and started catching his breath, his father allowed himself to laugh. Grayson was a bit worried at first, until he realized it wasn't a mocking one, but rather a proud and supportive one, as his father got closer and ruffled his hair.

"I hope it goes better than with us, then. Things were sort of rocky during our first journey." He traded a glance with Pikachu, lips curling up a bit more. "Even if I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world."

"Pika!" His partner nodded, rising a tiny fist cheerfully.

Father, son and Pokémon all shared another grin almost at once, only broken up when his father glanced over at the clock, showing they were mere minutes away from midnight. He crossed his arms and watched over Grayson again.

"Now though, it's getting late." He turned towards the door and the corridor beyond, nudging Grayson to do the same. "The first step to become a Pokémon Master is to sleep well and wake up in time."

He and Pikachu snickered a bit at that, and Grayson probably knew why. He grumbled, trying not to bring up how his father's journey started as he pouted.

"You never tell that to Adeline, you know." He rolled his eyes, muttering under his breath.

"Because unlike you, she actually goes to bed in time and never tries to sneak in my office. And that's with her violin lessons too."

Grayson grinded his teeth and clenched his fists at that. Of course miss prim and proper had to seem the perfect child compared to him! Even when she wasn't there, she always managed to make him sound bad by comparison. He sure looked forward to brush her smug grin off her face the moment they could have a Pokémon battle.

He shook his head and brushed aside any thought of his annoying sister, instead looking back at his father with a frown.

"Come on, dad! Just let me..." He yawned, fatigue catching up to him as he tried to sound defiant. "Stay up a little longer..."

He quickly tried to recompose himself and to sound as awake as possible, but his father knew that song and dance well. The man frowned and crossed his arms, with Pikachu emulating him.

"And then you're going to watch the semi-finals of the Lily of the Valley Conference the whole night instead of sleeping, right?"

"Hey, that was just once!" Grayson grumbled, rolling his eyes. "And you defeated *two* legendaries! *In a row* !"

His father just laughed that off, almost like it meant nothing to remember something like that. Not that it managed to dampen Grayson's newfound enthusiasm at all, and his father quickly traded a glance with Pikachu.



"Me and my Pokémon had much more fights and adventures than just that." He turned back to Grayson, grinning. "Want to hear about that time me and the others saved the world?"

The boy perked his head up, smiling once more. "Which one? Shamouti? The Kalos Crisis? Alamos Town?"

"Well, the last one wasn't the world. Just a town about to be erased from existence."

"I don't care! Tell me them all!" Grayson's grin only grew wider as he threw his arms up. "And also of your first League victory, too! The real one, not the Orange Islands!"

"Hey, that was a real League." His father rolled his eyes, only to sigh and look back to his son. "Alright then. Let's start from the beginning..."

Grayson and his father both sat on nearby chairs, and the man started to tell of how his adventure started, just like how he always did before moving on. And yet, even after listening to that story over and over, the boy loved each and every second of it.

Ash continued on, with Pikachu occasionally chiming in, talking of how he met his original team, how he conquered the Battle Frontier, how he stopped Team Rocket's ambitions more times than one could count, how he and Grayson's mother truly realized they loved each other, his first true League victory, and how he eventually crowned his dream and was officially recognized by the world as a Pokémon Master. All while never losing the content smile he wore, even as he went through the least happy parts of his journey.

And all the while, Grayson kept listening with full attention as he imagined himself in his father's shoes, living as many adventures as he wished, free as free could be, surrounded by his friends and facing his rivals in hot-blooded battles with everyone doing their best.

He always thought he was meant to be a trainer, and knowing everything his father did only made him even surer that it was his calling. If his father said he could be better than him, that meant he had to live up to his tales.

He continued to think that as his eyelids started to feel heavy and his consciousness started to slip, and before he could realize it Grayson was fast asleep, dreaming of his future as a Pokémon Master.

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Ash stopped his recollection of his Battle Royal with Alain, Paul and Tyson at the recent Royal Dome Tournament's exhibition match as he noticed that Grayson had finally fallen asleep, loudly snoring and draped over his chair with the goofiest grin on his face. It was enough for him to grin as well, before he stood up and took his son to bring him to his bed.

After placing Grayson in his room, the man took his time to look over his sleeping child. All his excitement and energy felt very familiar in more than one way, and by Pikachu's own little smile, he probably agreed with him.

Trainer and partner Pokémon quickly paced out of the room, closing the door behind them and letting out a tired yawn. Between several intense training sessions, an interview on the Goldenrod Radio, and having to put both Grayson and Adeline to sleep, the day had definitely taken its toll on him. It was probably time to turn off for the day as well.

"Grayson has finally decided to sleep, I see," a very familiar and warm voice chimed in.

Ash turned around towards the corridor, finding the radiant smile of his wife beckoning back at him. She sounded just a bit exasperated, but she still managed to maintain her composure and a bright disposition. All things befitting of Serena, former Kalos Queen and respected Performer and Coordinator known the world over.

He smiled back, his gaze shifting again towards the sleeping Grayson. "He's a bundle of energy and always curious to know about what we did, even if he heard the stories over and over again."

"I guess he really took after his father," Serena said as she joined his side, touching his hand.

Ash quickly intertwined hers with his own, clenching it tightly and feeling her warmth. Even after almost two decades, it was hard for him to realize that he was now a husband and a father of two wonderful children. If someone had told him that was where his adventures would eventually lead him to, he would've just laughed it off.

And yet here he was, in the middle of an adventure far more personal and difficult than all the times he saved the world, especially with how most of his fatherly experience came from raising a few Pokémon from eggs. That was just one of many reasons why he was glad to go through it with Serena and all of their friends.

"I guess." Ash shrugged, his gaze shifting slightly towards the closed door of Adeline's room. "If only he got some of Adeline's manners, too."

"Trust me, she's a little demon in disguise. I blame all the time she spends with Miette's daughter..." Serena's eyes went half-lidded for the briefest of moments, before she quickly recomposed herself.

Ash grinned just a bit, before he returned serious and shook his head. "Just a few years and they will go on their journeys. It's hard to believe it."

Serena nodded, her smile growing warmer as she still observed Grayson, the boy moving in his sleep and muttering something about winning the Indigo League. "Do you remember that time Grayson tried to convince Pikachu to go on a journey together and then returned chased by all those Spearow?"

"Sure do." Ash chuckled, rubbing the back of his neck. "And that wasn't even the last time he did that."

"Pikaaa pichu..." Pikachu grumbled, eyes half-lidded as he shifted to the side. Ash couldn't help but grin again, understanding his oldest friend.

"He's definitely not gonna slack off in terms of adventures." Ash shook his head, never losing his smile. "Who knows, maybe he'll reach Viridian City before I did."

Serena perked an eyebrow in return. "Is that gonna turn into a family tradition now?"

"Who knows?"

In response, his wife shook her head. "Better not tell that to Grayson. He'd take that as a challenge."

They both laughed that off, already imagining Grayson attempting to do just that while Adeline tried to keep him in line and called him an idiot in a hurry. Ash held Serena's hand tighter, letting out a heavy sigh.

"I'm glad to be able to spend these little moments together. Work can be pressing at times." Ash passed a hand through his hair, frowning. "Like tomorrow..."

Serena tilted her head. "You were called in for another tournament?"

"They want me as a guest of honor for a competition in Petalburg. Maybe I can get to meet Max and Sawyer too on the way."

Serena nodded, and Ash knew that in spite of the news he didn't have to worry about her feeling upset at that. They had long since accepted that their own goals and occupations wouldn't guarantee that they'd always be together at any given time, but that didn't mean

they loved each other any less than they actually did, and they always made sure to be there for each other and their children.

They both had enough knowledge about absent fathers to know how they didn't want Grayson and Adeline to feel, after all. They had no idea to know how well they were doing, but judging from their children's behavior, they assumed to be doing a good enough job.

His wife interrupted his train of thoughts with an encouraging smile. "Be sure to have fun. And don't challenge everyone on the way."

"Hey, I *have* some restraint by now." Ash rolled his eyes. And then he quickly grimaced, blushing just a bit. "Sometimes."

That was enough for Serena to giggle. "Sure, my Pokémon Master."

Ash paused, still not used to be called that. After spending years chasing a certain goal, remembering to have finally reached it always left him a bit dazed, almost questioning what drove him forward by now. Thankfully enough, he had long since found an answer to that. By now, knowing he was a Pokémon Master was just the first step of a far different path.

"Heh," Ash said, his eyes going to the several pictures lining up the corridor's walls, all showcasing the many groups of travelling companions Ash spent time with over the years. "It still feels like yesterday that we were just kids chasing after our goals."

"Time passes for everyone. We've grown, we've reached our dreams, and we've got children who will soon start growing as well." Serena's lips curled upward once more, her eyes going back to their children. "I want to see which kind of trainers they're gonna become."

"So do I." Ash nodded, bringing Serena a bit closer. "And I'm gonna be there for you and them both to see that."

Ash and Serena turned to each other, losing themselves in the other's eyes for all of a moment, all while Pikachu grinned and

moved out of the way. Both trainers smiled once more, and then pressed their lips together, enjoying the quiet moment together for as long as they could.

And as soon as they broke their kiss, Ash and Serena Ketchum both turned to Grayson and Adeline's rooms, their thoughts going back to them.

They would have to face many trials, commit many mistakes, learn from victory and defeat both to truly become great trainers. But both parents knew that their kids could make it, if they were even half as determined as they had been in the past.

Their own journeys might've been over, but they were more than ready to lead their children in walking the path to the future.

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**Hello to everyone, here! It's rare for me to publish a non-Reset fic, but I felt a brief need to branch out before I resumed work on Mewtwo, and thought this little fluffy piece would be a fun way to do so. I find a bit amusing that after my first Amourshipping fic was borderline platonic my following one dived straight on the opposite end of their eventual relationship, but I had fun writing a married Ash and Serena in the future, even if the story was overall pretty short.**

**The base inspiration from this story comes from a picture by the artist Ricardo Lira, showcasing a hypothetical future Ketchum family, with Ash and Serena having two children. I liked the idea and I decided to put my own spin on it, though without completely basing myself on the picture. One thing I really wanted to do was to subvert the seeming tradition of shonen series to portray the children of shonen heroes as resentful of their fathers (most notably Boruto towards Naruto, and Goku's children in fanfiction), especially since Ash is very open about his feelings for a shonen hero and thus I really can't see him becoming a bad father, especially after rising several baby Pokémon.**

As far as the kids' names are concerned, I wanted them to be somewhat close to the ones of Ash and Serena's mothers without being the exact same, thus Grayson for Grace and Adeline for Delia, with the added bonus of Adeline being a french name to further the connection to Serena and Kalos.

I actually have some more stories planned starring Grayson (and a few covering the gap period between canon and this, as well), but I'd prefer to wait until they're more solid before to share them. At worst, this is gonna be a standalone piece just for fluff, and I think in this sense it works pretty well.

I thank a lot RandomificationChaotic, Epicocity and Ander Arias for their help with this short story, and I hope you all enjoyed it, as well.

Thanks to everyone that will read, and see you all in my next endeavor!